3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

the Tümen Su. D. never bought it in the bazaar, but arranged with a particular fisherman to bring along his morning catch now and again. She paid him 4*d.* a pound for it, straight from the river. In winter the Chinese get frozen fish by post from Ili in the north, and this is regarded as a great delicacy; it is a kind of sturgeon, which if thawed gradually is quite eatable. But we much preferred fresh "heaven-fish." There is a theory among the Europeans of Kashgar that the local fish is dangerous to eat, on account of a poisonous gland or something of the kind; this seemed to us to be a myth, for neither we nor our guests ever felt the slightest ill-effects from it. We went out one morning with our friend the fisherman and his mate to study their methods. At 7 a.m. they called for us at the Consulate with their paraphernalia, which consisted of a large bag-shaped net on a triangular frame attached to a pole carried by one man, and a long stick carried by the other. Arrived at the canal (the Qizil Su in which they usually fished was rather a long walk from the Consulate, so the men said they would try the mill-canals of the Tümen Su) the man with the net entered the water and submerged the net, facing upstream; his mate waded in about fifty yards above and began beating the water with his pole, gradually working down, in order to drive any fish there were into the net. When he had finished the beat the other man lifted the net out of the water to see if there were any fish in it. We watched them do this at several different points, but we evidently brought them no luck, for not one did they catch. In the Kizil Su they used to get quite big fish, eight or ten pounds.

The king of Kashgar fruits is undoubtedly the melon known as the Beshak Shirin. It is indeed a super-melon. We used to think in Baluchistan that the melons were good, and at Kerman too I used to get fine ones by the donkey-load as presents from Persian friends. But the best of Persia and Baluchistan were only as the inferior kinds grown at Kashgar. The Beshak Shirin is shaped like the Cantelupe, and is yellow with green markings; it is on an average twice as big as any Cantelupe one sees in London shops, and when ripe its skin is so thin that its juice oozes out on to the dish. Its flesh, white or pale yellow, you can eat right down to the skin and its flavour is ambrosial. We weighed and measured a fairly good specimen from our own garden—by no means the biggest I have seen; its circumference was 33 inches and its weight

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

226

KASHGARI FISHERMEN AT WORK IN A CANAL

498

ON TOUR IN THE PLAINS; OUR CARTS STARTING OUT FROM A CHINESE REST-HOUSE

[Face p. 246]